

Pied Flycatcher *Ficedula hypoleuca* at Kakamega Forest—a readmission to the East African list

Britton (1980) discussed specimens and descriptions of birds reported in East Africa as Pied Flycatchers *Ficedula hypoleuca*, and concluded, in view of the problems of separation from Collared Flycatcher *F. albicollis* and Semi-collared Flycatcher *F. semitorquata*, that there was no entirely satisfactory record. Pearson (1981) identified two first-winter specimens at Nairobi Museum (from Kakamega, December 1970, and from Mt Elgon, January 1976) as Semi-collared, and suggested that most of the birds claimed as Pied Flycatchers in East Africa were in fact this species. Since that time no further *Ficedula* flycatchers have been collected or caught for ringing in Kenya, and the few sight records assigned to a species have been identified as Semi-collared.

One of the indeterminate birds mentioned by Britton (*op. cit.*), a Smithsonian Museum specimen, was an immature male collected at Kakamega by A. D. Forbes-Watson on 8 December 1965. Ripley & Bond (1971) had claimed this as a first record of Pied Flycatcher for Kenya, but J. S. Ash examined the bird and was unable to rule out the possibility of Semi-collared. The specimen disappeared unaccountably for many years, but was recently rediscovered, and I have been able to examine it at the British Natural History Museum at Tring and compare it with the *Ficedula* material available there. In my view it is indeed a Pied Flycatcher. The specimen has also been checked carefully and independently by K. Mild and L. Svensson, and they are of the same opinion.

The bird, sexed male, was in first-winter plumage as judged by the shape of the pale tertial fringes (see Svensson 1993). It lacked the white subterminal bands on the hindneck feathers shown by first-winter Collared Flycatcher. It was compared at Tring with many first-winter Pied (including three males and one female from West Africa) and with six first-winter Semi-collared (two males, four females). The details on which its identification were based were as follows (primaries numbered from outermost inwards, tail feathers from innermost outwards):

Winglength: 79 mm.

Wing formula: P3 longest, P4 0.5 mm shorter, P5 -4 mm, P6 -10 mm; P2 5.5 mm shorter than P3 ($1.5 < P5$); P1 3.8 mm longer than primary coverts (PC) and 39 mm shorter than tip of P2.

White on the primary bases: confined to the outer webs of P6–P8, extending only 5–6 mm along the shafts, and hidden entirely beneath the primary coverts.

White areas in the outer tail feathers: the middle and base of the outer webs of T5 and T6 extending to the base of the inner webs as a wedge along the shaft, and demarcated sharply and obliquely from dark distal part of outer webs (no white fringe around tips); also a mark on the middle of the outer edge of T4.

Median coverts: no contrasting pale tips like those usually seen in young Semi-collared.

The winglength of the Kakamega flycatcher was typical of first-winter male Pied

(see Mild 1994), and just below the range he gives for first-winter male Semi-collared. Wing structure details matched those of the first-winter Pied examined, almost all of which had $P2 < P5$. One male from Sierra Leone with a winglength of 80 mm had exactly the same wing formula measurements as the Kakamega bird. On the other hand, all six first-winter Semi-collared at Tring had $P2 > P5$ and had a smaller $P1-PC$ difference than the Kakamega bird, while five of them (the exception was a female) had a longer $P2-P1$ difference. The $P1-PC$ difference and the $P2-P1$ difference of the Kakamega bird are just outside ranges given for first-winter Semi-collared by Mild (1994).

The primary base markings of the Kakamega bird, with a little white limited to $PP6-8$, matched that on other first-winter Pied. The six Semi-collared, however, showed white on $P5$ as well as $PP6-8$, four of them additionally on $P4$ and one on $P3$; this was more extensive, reaching about 9–10 mm along the shaft of $PP6-7$ and showing 1–3 mm beyond the primary coverts in all cases.

The white tail pattern of the Kakamega bird was typical of male Pied (see also Svensson 1993, p. 225), but since a similar pattern is found in a minority of Semi-collared (K. Mild, *in litt.*) this feature cannot be taken as conclusive by itself. The brown upperparts of the bird matched those of West African wintering Pied, and were greyer than in most Semi-collared, but again this is apparently not a safe distinction since some Semi-collared in first-winter plumage are as brown as Pied (K. Mild, *in litt.*).

In summary, the Kakamega flycatcher was a typical Pied with regard to all crucial characters. It would be exceptional for a Semi-collared with respect to three independent criteria—winglength, wing formula and pattern of white on the primary bases—and it also had an atypical tail pattern for that species. Information on the extremes of variation in first-winter Semi-collared is admittedly limited by the small number of specimens present in collections, but even so, the Kakamega bird must be identified as a Pied Flycatcher on the basis of present knowledge.

The Pied Flycatcher breeds east through Europe to western Siberia. Eastern populations migrate in autumn through the Black Sea area, most apparently to wintering grounds in West Africa (Cramp & Perrins 1993). The documented wintering range extends east only to northern Democratic Republic of Congo (Zaire) and the Central African Republic. I have, however, examined with Dr M. Louette, two northeast Zaire specimens (a male and a female) from the Tervuren Museum that were certainly this species. They were collected in March at Mahagi, some 10 km from the Uganda border. Occasional Pied presumably do therefore reach East Africa along with other *Ficedula* flycatchers, and the occurrence of this species in western Kenya is not entirely surprising.

This 1965 specimen has been accepted by the East African Rarities Committee as the first record of the species for Kenya.

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Interesting bird observations from Ethiopia

Imperial Eagles *Aquila heliaca*

On both 17 September 1993 and 23 September 1994, John Atkins and I had conclusive views of juvenile Imperial Eagles *Aquila heliaca* 7 km south east of Akaki, south east of Addis Ababa. The habitat is open, almost treeless cultivation on relatively flat land but with nearby low hills and within 7 km of the Awash flood plains and lakes. The sightings coincided with substantial Palaearctic migration all along the road to Awash and, most noticeably, in Awash National Park. Clearly, the Awash Valley is an important southward migration route. As there are no confirmed Imperial Eagle records for the Ethiopian Atlas currently in preparation, the following details are put on record.

In 1993, the sighting concerned a single bird soaring (and distantly perched on the ground) with two juvenile Steppe Eagles *A. nipalensis*. The Imperial was noticeably larger, with longer wings, a long square-ended tail and, most strikingly, a more protruding neck and larger bill. These features combined to give a powerful, rangy appearance. It soared on flat wings with upraised, deeply-spread and deep-fingered primary tips. It was very pale sandy brown with strikingly contrasting dark flight feathers and tail, with a paler wedge on the underside of the inner secondaries. The breast was clearly dark-streaked, contrasting with the pale belly. An indistinct white trailing edge to the secondaries and extensive paler uppertail coverts, rump and lower back were occasionally visible.

In 1994, no less than seven Imperial Eagles were seen in exactly the same place and all were perched on the ground or small bushes in what appeared to be a loose group. They were identical in plumage and allowed reasonably close approach although they made short, low flights when we got too close. Their pale, milky or sandy brown bodies contrasted with dark brown flight and tail feathers. Views were obtained through a telescope when the elongated nostril and powerful bill were clearly seen.

The overall impression was of very large, long-winged and long-tailed eagles looking much more powerful than Steppe and Tawny *A. rapax* Eagles, with which we are